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SUBJECT: DUTCH VIEWS ON PM'S MARCH 16 MEETING WITH PRESIDENT

Classified By: AMB CLIFFORD M. SOBEL FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) Summary: On March 9, Ambassador Sobel met separately with FM Bot and the PM's diplomatic advisor, Rob Swartbol, to preview the March 16 meeting between the President and PM Balkenende. PM Balkenende will bring the message that the Dutch EU presidency will advance the transatlantic agenda in concrete ways, including seeking close U.S.-EU cooperation on the Greater Middle East, on counter-terrorism, and on the international economic agenda. He also will be prepared to talk about Turkey and China. In preparation for the visit, the GoNL is advancing plans for PRT's in Afghanistan and an extension of Dutch troops in Iraq. These deployment decisions are in the planning phase, and will require detailed discussion with parliament. The public impression the Dutch want to create is that the Netherlands is a serious partner of the U.S., focused on getting things done with us and serving as a bridge to Europe. The Prime Minister and Foreign Minister are traveling extensively to solidify relationships in Europe before their presidency begins. End Summary.

Turkey

12. (C) Just back from an EU troika visit to Ankara, FM Bot said that Turkey's prospects for joining the EU were looking good but would depend heavily on whether a Cyprus deal is reached. As a former ambassador to Ankara, Bot also noted that Turkey remains a "master of shooting itself in the foot." During talks with the troika, both Gul and Erdogan insisted that, if a Cyprus deal is reached, the Annan deal should be incorporated into EU primary law, which would require ratification in all EU countries. The Troika said that such a process could doom Turkey's and northern Cyprus's accession if even one country failed to ratify. Erdogan and Gul reportedly insisted that they need the legal protection. Bot said Turkey fears that even a private citizen upset about real estate could take the Annan plan to the European Court, that the court could find the Annan plan in violation of EU primary law, and that that in turn could block northern Cyprus from entering the EU. Separately, PM Balkenende's diplomatic advisor Rob Swartbol said PM Balkenende spoke with President Chirac for 45 minutes March 9 about Turkey and IGC matters. Swartbol was more cautious about Turkey's prospects, noting that some countries, including France, were not yet prepared to give Turkey an unqualified "yes."

Greater Middle East

13. (C) The Dutch plan to tell the President that they are prepared to put into action any agreements on GME that the G-8, NATO, U.S.-EU, and EU Council summits reach in June. The Dutch believe the U.S. and EU should be partners in implementing a strategy for the Middle East, that their message should be coordinated so no perceived differences can be exploited, and that they should play to their relative strengths, creating a synergy. FM Bot cited non-proliferation, rule of law and democracy as goals for the region, and reiterated an interest in seeing the peace process move forward. (Note: In a March 5 speech to a Dutch Christian Democratic group, Bot endorsed the President's call for a UNSC nonproliferation resolution and for U.S.-EU cooperation on the greater Middle East. End note.) Swartbol later said the Dutch were talking to Turkey about the possibility of Turkey hosting a meeting between the EU and the Conference of Islamic States during the Dutch EU presidency.

Iraq

14. (C) The PM will ask about U.S. intentions in Iraq after June 30 and will tell the President that the cabinet instructed the military to begin plans to extend the troops through 2004, pending parliamentary approval. They are also intrigued at the idea of training Iraqi diplomats and reviewing whether they have the capacity to coordinate an international effort or to "train the trainers."

Afghanistan

15. (C) The Prime Minister will also say that the Dutch have a team in Afghanistan now to investigate possible participation in a provincial reconstruction team. Current indications are that they will offer to lead a PRT. They have begun to lay the groundwork with parliament.

Counter-Terrorism

16. (C) Political Director Siblesz said that the Dutch would like to use their presidency to get the EU as a whole to do the kinds of things the Dutch and U.S. are doing bilaterally, especially on such border security issues as the Container Security Initiative and biometrics. Swartbol said the Dutch were toying with the idea of suggesting that the EU create a Solana-like position for Justice and Home Affairs so that the EU had a clear counterpart to offer to the U.S. and other external partners.

Innovation

17. (U) The Prime Minister is interested in spurring more cooperation between the U.S. and the EU on economic and technical innovation. He believes the EU's Lisbon agenda should be pursued in cooperative terms with the U.S., vice competitive ones. He is also considering hosting an event on innovation with the explicit goal of generating a report to the EU Council that in turn would lead to a Council direction to the Commission.

Norms and Values

18. (U) Balkende might also describe how he plans to make norms and values an agenda item in Europe during the Dutch presidency.
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